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UPPER PENINSULA ASSOCIATION OF RURAL HEALTH SERVICES, INC.

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National Health Center Week is August 7-13

Message: Health centers offer personalized care, save taxpayer dollars

NEWS RELEASE

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EWEN—The U.P. Association of Rural Health Services, Inc., is joining health centers around the nation in celebrating National Health Center Week 2011, which is August 7-13 this year. The national effort seeks to raise awareness about the mission and accomplishments of America's Health Centers as local solutions.

The theme of this year's NHCW is "Celebrating America's Health Centers: Serving Locally, Leading Nationally," to underscore how health centers deliver a unique approach that targets health needs and saves taxpayer dollars.

"Health centers are a partnership of people, governments and communities who work together to meet the unique and diverse health conditions of the community," said Joseph Zyble, communications manager for the U.P. Association of Rural Health Services, which operates several clinics across the U.P., including the Ewen Medical-Dental Center in Ewen. "Although health centers rely on a portion of federal funding, they are not a bureaucracy. They're run from the bottom up, by a patient-majority governing board who guides how limited resources can be effectively directed to meet the health care needs of the community."

One of the bright spots in America's health care system, health centers provide a health care home to over 23 million people at 8,000 sites nationwide. The health center model of care was rated as one of the most effective programs by then-President George W. Bush's Office of Management and Budget. Indeed, presidents from both parties and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have long-recognized the value of health centers and supported their expansion.

Health centers are on track to expand their care to 40 million people over the next five years. It is projected that more health care homes in communities will lead to reduced health care costs and unnecessary

hospitalizations and visits to the hospital emergency rooms. According to the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), there are 60 million people in the country with limited or no access to primary care providers – a trend that shows no sign of improving with the economic recession.

“Every day in our waiting rooms I witness the value of having a health care home,” said Lois Abramson, site manager of the Ewen Medical-Dental Center. “When people have a place to go for regular care, they use it and stay healthier. We provide a range of services – primary care services, dentistry, pharmacy, even mental health services.

According to Abramson, the sliding fee program offered to qualifying patients at the health center is needed now more than ever.

“Without it some people would not get the health care they need,” she said.

“Our patients are treated with dignity and respect. This is what health care should be and what we celebrate during National Health Center Week,” she added.

National health center officials note that public support is needed for health centers now more than ever as Congress attempts to reduce the budget deficit with spending cuts to the program and changes to Medicaid that could further reduce access to preventive care for millions of people.

For more information about the health centers program visit www.nachc.org.

(To contact the Ewen Medical-Dental Center call 906-988-2210 or toll free at 800-270-2904. To learn more about the U.P. Association of Rural Health Services visit www.upruralhealth.org)